



Trail Talk

Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guide Program

Trail Talk Volume 14, Issue 1

Trail Guide Program Annual Report 2009

by Fred Kramer, Trail Guide President

The Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guide Program had another very successful year in 2009! We led more than 300 interpretive walks for almost 4800 visitors. In addition to leading walks, we supported MTRP in a multitude of other ways: staffing MTRP tables at various special events, developing kiosk displays, presenting programs, writing articles for *Trail Talk*, helping with the training program, etc. In this report, I've tried to summarize our accomplishments during 2009. My sincere thanks to all the Trail Guides who have volunteered their time and talents this year to keep the Trail Guide program flourishing.

Regularly Scheduled Interpretive Walks.

The primary purpose of the Trail Guide program is to

lead interpretive walks in which we share the natural, cultural, and historical features of Mission Trails with the public. In 2009, we led 154 walks from the Visitor Center and 23 from Kumeyaay Lake Campground. Attendance on these walks and those in previous years is shown in the table below. Attendance on the Visitor Center walks in 2009 increased from previous years; attendance on Campground walks increased from the previous two years. The no-show rate in 2009 was 11%, down from around 21% in 2008. I believe the publicity efforts we have been pursuing are paying off with both increased overall attendance and fewer no-show walks. However, I still know that walks attracting no visitors are frustrating for the Trail Guides staffing them, and we need to

continue our publicity efforts to reduce the number further.

Jeanne Raimond, a long-time co-leader with Mike Wellik for the monthly bird walks, took over responsibility for these walks in October when Mike moved from the area. Jeanne will continue leading these popular walks in 2010, with Millie Basden volunteering to assist and be a backup. In 2009, the 12 bird walks attracted 109 adults and 15 kids.

There is an exciting addition to our line-up of regular walks in 2010. Mike Gibbs will be leading a wildlife tracking walk at 8:30 a.m. the first Saturday of every month. Like the bird walks, the tracking walks will start from varying locations in the park each month. So, check the MTRP web site for

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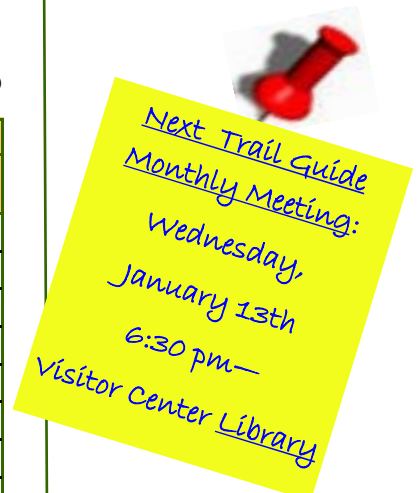
Writers wanted...

- Have an interesting story or photo you'd like to share with other Trail Guides? Send them to 'Trail Talk' editor Millie Basden at trailtalkeditor@yahoo.com. Please include "Trail Talk" in the subject line!

Speakers Needed...

- Have you heard an interesting speaker or know an interesting topic that would be appropriate for one of our monthly meetings? If so, please send your ideas to Brian or Ondina Moehl.

Year	Visitor Center Walks				Kumeyaay Lake Campground Walks			
	Number	Number of Adults	Number of Kids	Total	Number	Number of Adults	Number of Kids	Total
2009	154	741	316	1057	23	74	105	179
2008	154	606	317	923	24	53	49	102
2007	151	577	317	894	23	75	59	134
2006	154	570	247	817	23	105	90	195
2005	152	430	293	723	23	93	106	199
2004	154	430	209	639	21	62	73	125
2003	146	454	207	661	23	56	91	147
2002	154	467	189	656	24	27	30	57
2001	154	443	239	682	21	29	25	54



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details and join Mike on some of these wildlife adventures.

Special Interpretive Walks.

During the year, we also led 117 special walks for a variety of groups that requested our services. We had 1415 adults and 2013 children on these

Year	Special Walks			
	Number	Number of Adults	Number of Kids	Total
2009	117	1415	2013	3428
2008	130	1421	1945	3366
2007	120	1306	1863	3169
2006	76	794	943	1737
2005	45	474	479	953
2004	39	406	590	996
2003	56	559	696	1255
2002	41	633	640	1273
2001	42	359	356	715

walks, more than prior years. Attendance numbers since 2001 are shown in the table.

Special walks usually provide a guaranteed number of visitors and are opportunities that many Trail Guides eagerly sign up for. Explore Mission Trails Day on May 16 offered the opportunity for Trail Guides to lead six walks throughout the park during the day's activities. We had over 200 people go on these walks that had themes oriented toward families and children. We also led six successful twilight walks from Kumeyaay Lake Campground this year during the summer months. Not only was attendance good and visitor response positive, Trail Guides enjoyed this change of pace from daytime walks. Judy Alvarez, together with other Trail Guides, led the popular 6:00 a.m. Solstice Sunrise hikes on Cowles Mountain this year. The walk on December 20th attracted 150 people! Although it was an overcast morning, the actual sunrise was visible below the clouds. The walk on the 22nd was canceled due to rain.

Congratulations and thanks to Steve

Haiman who led the most walks this year with 48; Steve, a 2006 Trail Guide graduate has led many walks every year since graduation. Congratulations also to Tom Thompson, who was second with 24 walks. Tom is a 2009 graduate and only started leading walks in April. Close behind Tom were George Varga with 23, and Terry & Wendy Esterly with 21 and 22, respectively.

Kiosk Displays.

The kiosk display in the front of the

Visitor Center opened in 2000, and Trail Guides took responsibility for interpretive exhibits on the right-hand panel. This provides Trail Guides an opportunity to study a particular subject and create an informative display for the public. My thanks to the following Trail Guides for outstanding displays during 2009:

- January–March: Tim West put together an interesting display on Historical Periods.
- April–June: George & Nancy Varga did an informative display on Wild Cucumber.
- July–September: Lyn Olsson did a great display on Ravens.
- October–December: Pam Weinisch created a terrific display on Bees.

Meetings and Programs.

We held 11 monthly meetings during 2009, omitting one in December. These meetings provided the opportunity for Trail Guides to get together to discuss issues of concern, to pass along information about MTRP and administrative issues, and to present a program relevant to Trail Guides.

Brian & Ondina Moehl continued in their role of VP (Programs) and scheduled outstanding programs for the year. We are very fortunate to have them continue in this important role.

In January, Rick Halsey gave a presen-

tation on MTRP Habitats. In February, Shannon O'Dunn gave a presentation on MTRP Geology. In March, Trail Guide Judy Alvarez gave a presentation on the Kumeyaay. The January, February, and March lectures were in conjunction with Trail Guide training. In April, Trail Guide Nancy Varga gave a slide presentation on her Grand Canyon rafting trip. In May, former Trail Guide Shasta Gaughen gave an informative presentation on Cupeño Ethnobotany. In June, Barry Martin gave an interesting presentation titled "A Day in the Life of a Professional Tracker." In July, Miguel Miller from the National Weather Service gave presentation titled "San Diego's Fascinating Weather." The August meeting was held outside in the Visitor Center Amphitheater. The program was Los Californios performing authentic music from the California Rancho Period.

Steve Haiman led the most regularly scheduled walks this year with 48.

We had a campfire and roasted marshmallows and made s'mores afterwards. In September, Bill Howell gave a comprehensive and informative slide presentation on the Butterflies of Mission Trails. In October, Alyson Wright gave an interesting talk on REI's Promoting Environmental Awareness in Kids (PEAK) Program. Finally, in November, Greg Rubin gave a great presentation titled "Native Landscape Myths and Legends." Trail Guides, MTRP staff and volunteers, and family and friends are always welcome at our monthly programs. Attendance at the meetings was higher than prior years with over 40 people at four of the meetings. Attendance ranged from 23 to 48.

In 2009, we incorporated a "Historic Events for Mission Trails" feature to our meetings in which a Trail Guide presented a short report describing

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some local historic event and its connection to Mission Trails. My thanks to the following Trail Guides for their excellent presentations: Judy Alvarez, Jo Ann Ellen, Tim West,



Chris Axtmann, Arleen Hitchcock, George Varga, Pam Weinisch, and Fred Kramer.

We continued awarding a “Best Trail Guide Walk Write-up of the Month” bookmark prize at each meeting to the Trail Guide(s) with the best walk write-up during the previous month. The prizes are meant to encourage Trail Guides to go back to the intranet after the walk and enter the number of visitors and some interesting observations from the walk. The “Judging Panel,” who wish to remain anonymous so as not to be subjected to bribes, picked the following winners:

- November 2008: Lyn Olsson and George Varga for their VC walk on November 16
- December 2008: Betty Kirchhevel and Steve Haiman for their VC walk on December 28
- January: Betty Kirchhevel for her VC walk on January 25
- February: George Varga, Brad Buxton, and Ranger Heidi for their special walk on February 26
- March: Cara Furio for her special walk on March 21
- April: Cheri Barbour for her

VC walk on April 8

- May: Chris Axtmann and Trent Robertson for their EMTD “bug walk” on May 16
- June: Kristi Scrivener, Louise Thomas, and Nancy Clement for their KLC walk on June 13
- July: Luann Wright and Tom Hale for their special walk on July 23
- August: Cheri Barbour and Pam Weinisch for their Twilight Walk on August 1
- September: Terry & Wendy Esterly for their Twilight Walk on September 19
- October: Arleen Hitchcock and Jo Ann Ellen for their VC walk on October 24
- November and December: to be announced

I encourage you to go to the intranet schedule, read the winning walk descriptions, and see if you wouldn’t have liked to have been on these walks, too!

Trail Talk Newsletter.



Trail Talk

Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guide Program

Petra Koellhoffer, the *Trail Talk* Editor since April 2008, decided in August she would like to turn this position over to someone else. Petra did an outstanding job editing *Trail Talk* every month and often contributed interesting articles, too. I know I speak for the entire Trail Guide team in saying how much we appreciated the excellent issues month-after-month during her tenure. We were fortunate to have Millie Basden readily step up to take over the *Trail Talk* Editor position! She has done an outstanding job since starting with the September issue. Also, our thanks to Tom Walters for his continuing creativity and dedication as Production Manager since October 2002. Thanks are also in order for Ed Bailey, who has diligently handled the distribution of the paper copies of *Trail Talk*

since October 2002. Finally, Wendy Esterly, *Trail Talk* staff photographer, (and many other Trail Guides) contributed many wonderful pictures. Special thanks to Peter Thomas for his photos for the new “Name the Life Form” item in recent issues.

Each issue included minutes from our monthly meetings, taken by Secretary Linda Kramer or an alternate, so that Trail Guides who missed meetings could keep up-to-date.

Trail Talk also provided information about Trail Guide and MTRP issues and events. However, an important function of *Trail Talk* is to publish articles with information that Trail Guides can use on the trail. Numerous Trail Guides were contributors throughout the year: Petra Koellhoffer, Wendy Esterly, George Varga, Yvonne Ellen, Bill Howell, Roy Warfield, Lyn Olsson, Joan Helland, Millie Basden, Jeanne Raimond, Tom Hale, Terry Gaughen, and Fred Kramer.

Treks.

Opal Daly continued in 2009 as our trek coordinator and organized an outstanding trek for us on Sunday, March 15, to Ruffin Canyon, one of the City of San Diego’s open space parks. Trail Guide Bonnie Hough leads the Friends of Ruffin Canyon group. We were very fortunate to have Monica Fuentes, one of the canyon volunteers, lead us on the walk. We enjoyed the many flowers blooming in their native plant garden and the coastal habitat of the canyon. Treks are outings to some places that provide us the opportunity to learn something about the natural and cultural features of areas outside MTRP and relate this information to what we see inside the park. As Opal plans more great treks for 2010, I hope Trail Guides will take advantage of these enjoyable outings!

Trail Guide Training Program, Class of 2009.

Under the able leadership of Trail Guide Training Program Director Bill Howell, the 15th annual Trail Guide training began in January 2009. Assisting Bill was the “Training Team” consisting of Judy Alvarez, Dave Bailey, Reva Block, Wendy

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Esterly, Bill White, Ranger Heidi Gutknecht, and Fred & Linda Kramer. As usual, the program went for 10 weeks, with a three-hour class-



room session every Wednesday evening and a three-hour field activity on Saturday mornings. The curriculum included training and guest lectures on ecology, botany, geology, history, birds, reptiles, mammals and tracking, insects, and Kumeyaay culture. At the end, students took a written exam on the material and demonstrated their interpretive skills by taking a veteran trail guide on a sample walk. Twenty-eight students "toughed it out" and graduated on Saturday morning, March 28, during ceremonies in the Visitor Center Amphitheater. This was a larger class than many recent years. Many of the graduates have become very active.

Publicity.

At the beginning of 2009, Chris

Axtmann took over as Publicity Chairperson from Linda Hawley, who had done an excellent job since June 2006. Chris continued submitting weekly walk announcements to the "Calendar of Local Events / Outdoors" section of the *San Diego Reader*. The item each week was tailored to include something interesting and enticing currently happening in the park. We had many indications that people on our walks were there because of the *Reader* announcements. Chris also continued to publicize our walks in a number of other venues, including *Family Magazine*, the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, and various web sites. I believe that these announcements have had a positive impact on attendance at our walks.

By sharing our knowledge and love of the park, we enable the public to learn about the natural habitats preserved in Mission Trails and to understand the importance of conserving these resources.

Administration.

The MTRP Trail Guide Program has an informal organization with officers: Fred Kramer, President; Vice-President (Programs), Brian &

Ondina Moehl; Bill Howell, Training Program Director; Linda Kramer, Secretary; Chris Axtmann, Publicity Chair; and Millie Basden, Tom Walters, Wendy Esterly, and Ed Bailey, *Trail Talk* staff. Many Trail Guides helped with various tasks throughout the year on an *ad hoc* basis. Ranger Heidi Gutknecht continued to provide excellent guidance and oversight as our liaison with City Staff during 2009.

Future Challenges and Opportunities.

I again want to thank all the Trail Guides who made our program so successful during 2009. Our accomplishments listed above are extensive and important. By sharing our knowledge and love of the park, we enable the public to learn about the natural habitats preserved in Mission Trails and to understand the importance of conserving these resources. This is an ongoing mission. As Trail Guides, we need to continually refresh and expand our knowledge of the natural and cultural history of the park, and to refine our interpretive skills. We will continue to provide opportunities for growth in these areas during 2010. My ongoing challenge is to keep the Trail Guide program relevant and interesting for Trail Guides who will then want to continue to lead walks and participate in other activities. I am always open to suggestions to improve the program.

Trail Guide 2010 Training Lecture Schedule

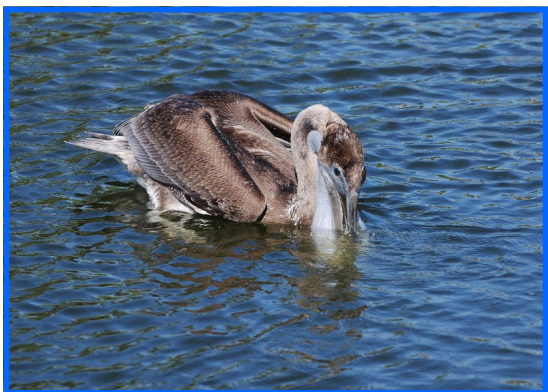
Here's the schedule of lectures for the next Trail Guide training class. Lectures start around 7:45 p.m. unless there is a Trail Guide meeting that night (marked with an asterisk); then they start at 7:15 p.m. (Of course, you'll be coming to the meeting at 6:30 p.m.) Please feel free to attend any of the lectures you might want as a refresher. Since we expect another large class, please don't sit at the tables or take any handouts until all the regular students have received theirs.

- 1/13* Ecology by Rick Halsey
- 1/20 Botany I by Bill Howell
- 1/27 Birds by Dave Bailey
- 2/3 History by Bill White
- 2/10* Arthropods by Dr. Michael Wall
- 2/17 Mammals by Bill Howell
- 2/24 Geology by Dr. Pat Abbott
- 3/3 Indians by Judy Alvarez
- 3/10* Reptiles by Dr. Brad Hollingsworth
- 3/17 Botany II by Bill Howell

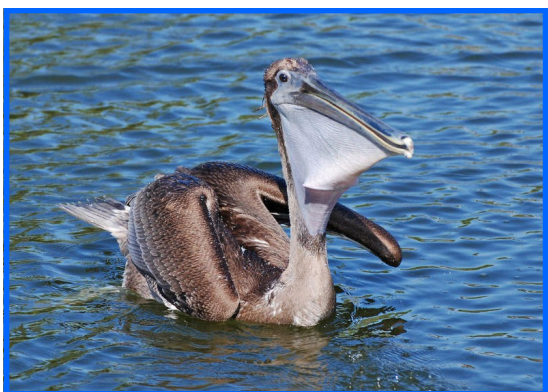
A Wonderful Bird Is The Pelican! Story by Millie Basden, photos by Wendy Esterly, Trail Guides



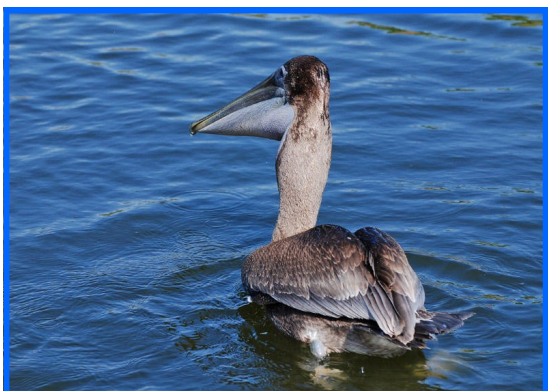
A wonderful bird is the pelican,



His bill will hold more than his belican,



He can take in his beak, enough food for a week,



But I'm damned if I see how the helican!

In 1910, Tennessee newspaperman Dixon Lanier Merritt penned this catchy, but somewhat misleading, limerick after receiving a postcard from Florida featuring a pelican. The Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) is most well-known for its plunge-dive feeding behavior, but it also employs surface-seizing as demonstrated by these photos taken at Santee Lakes in August. As a fish is captured, a pelican's gular pouch expands with water, which drains out before the pelican swallows the fish with a toss of the head, a process that is completed in less than a minute.

When Merritt wrote his limerick, the Brown Pelican was a common bird of coastal waters of the United States. By 1960, pelicans were disappearing due to the effects of DDT and other pesticides. Listed as an endangered species in 1973, the pelican made a dramatic comeback when use of organochlorine pesticides was reduced or banned. Today, pelicans are off the endangered species list and once again are common in coastal waters. After breeding season, Brown Pelicans are known to wander widely, and are then seen on inland waters, such as Santee Lakes or Lake Murray. With apologies to Merritt, I say...

*A wonderful bird is the pelican,
Endangered no more,
He continues to store*

Lots of fish, so we can see how the helican.

References:

Shields, Mark. 2002. Brown Pelican, *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/609> (accessed December 25, 2009).

Wikipedia contributors, "Dixon Lanier Merritt," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Dixon_Lanier_Merritt&oldid=324217726 accessed December 25, 2009).

What's Happening at the Park

Here's some of the events taking place in and around MTRP. See the website for more information. For outdoor activities, bring water and wear sturdy walking shoes. Many outdoor events are canceled if raining.

Saturday, January 16...

Bird Walk - Join Trail Guide Jeanne Raimond from 8 to 10:30 for an adventure in bird watching! This month: Grasslands/Spring Canyon. Meet in the Equestrian Area parking lot off Mast Blvd.

Saturday, January 23...

Canyoneer Walk—Naturalists from the San Diego Natural History Museum will follow the switchback trail up Cowles Mountain to the highest point in San Diego. Meet near the northeast corner of Golfcrest Drive & Navajo Road. 8 a.m.—11 a.m.

Star Party—Join resident star gazer and Trail Guide George Varga to view the night time sky. See the Pleiades, the Double Cluster in Perseus, the Andromeda Galaxy and the great Orion Nebula. Meet at the far end of the Kumeyaay Lake Campground Day Use Parking Lot. 5 to 8 p.m. (weather permitting).

Saturday, January 30...

Birding Basics—Join resident Birder Winona Sollock for a 90-minute class at the Visitor Center. Learn five simple techniques for identifying birds at a glance. You'll also

learn to use a field guide, so bring yours. 1 p.m.

Saturday, February 6...

Tracking Walk—Learn the art of discovering signs left behind by resident creatures during two fun-filled hours of "dirt time" with Tracking Team member Mike Gibbs. Meet at the Visitor Center. 8:30 a.m.



When your eye is so trained that it may discover the beauty that dwells in the vast, still corner of the world, and your ear is attuned to catch the music of the plains or the anthems sung in deep cañons by the winds; when your heart finds comradeship in the mountains and the great sand-seas, the sun and the stars, and the huge cloud-drifts that the Desert winds set a-rolling round the world—when all these reach your heart by way of your eye and your ear, then you shall find one of the alluring ways that belongs to the Desert.

- Idah Meacham Strobridge, 1855-1932. *In Miners' Mirage-Land; The Lure of the Desert*



If you can't do a walk you signed-up for, arrange for someone to take your place or let Fred or Ranger Heidi know you won't be there.

Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guide Program

President—Fred Kramer
VP (Programs) - Brian & Ondina Moehl
Secretary—Linda Kramer
Publicity Chair—Chris Axtmann
Ranger Liaison- Heidi Gutknecht
Training Program Director—Bill Howell
Trail Talk Editor—Millie Basden
Trail Talk Production—Tom Walters
Trail Talk Distribution- Ed Bailey
Trail Talk Photographer—Wendy Esterly

The Trail Guide Program is dedicated to provide the visiting public with education and understanding of the unique environmental and historical attributes of Mission Trails Regional Park. The Trail Guides supplement the Park Rangers in outreach programs to the public.

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